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CLAIMS

1. An emergency evacuation apparatus (10) for use with an adjustable bed and for removing a bed-ridden person (P) from the adjustable bed in an emergency situation, comprising a base tray (11) having at least one transverse fold line (12) to
5 allow the base tray (11) to bend as two or more panels (13), the base tray (11) being adapted to stay on top of the adjustable bed and bend along the at least one transverse fold line (12) when the profile of the adjustable bed is changed during normal use; and mechanical locking means (20) operable between an unlocked condition in which the base tray (11) is able to bend along the transverse fold line (12) and a locked
10 condition in which the base tray (11) is unable to bend along the transverse fold line (12) and to provide the base tray (11) with sufficient longitudinal rigidity to support the weight of an adult person.
2. An emergency evacuation apparatus (10) according to claim 1, wherein the
15 mechanical locking means is one or more rigid locking bolts (20).
3. An emergency evacuation apparatus (10) according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the base tray (11) has three transverse fold lines (12a, 12b, 12c) to allow the base tray to bend as four panels (13a, 13b, 13c, 13d).
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4. An emergency evacuation apparatus (10) according to any preceding claim, wherein the underside of the base tray (11) is provided with wheels (17), glide members, roller balls or castors to facilitate its movement over the floor.
- 25 5. An emergency evacuation apparatus (10) according to claim 4, wherein the wheels (17), glide members, roller balls or castors are fitted in channels on the underside of the base tray (11).
6. An emergency evacuation apparatus (10) according to claim 4 or claim 5,
30 further comprising u-shaped runners (16) fixed to the underside of the base tray (11) into which the wheels (17), glide members, roller balls or castors are fitted.

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7. An emergency evacuation apparatus (10) according to any preceding claim, further comprising straps (21) secured to the base tray (11) for wrapping around the person (P) in an emergency situation to restrain the person (P).
- 5 8. An emergency evacuation apparatus (10) according to claim 7, wherein the straps (21) are provided with snap-fit couplings which permit them to be connected together to encircle the person (P) prior to tightening them.
9. An emergency evacuation apparatus (10) according to claim 7 or claim 8,
10 wherein the base tray (11) has two longitudinal folds lines (14a, 14b) defining a central panel (15a) for supporting the person (P) and two side panels (15b, 15c) that can be bent out of the plane of the central panel (15a) by the straps (21).
10. An emergency evacuation apparatus (10) according to any preceding claim,
15 wherein the base tray (11) is made of polypropylene.
11. An emergency evacuation apparatus (10) according to any preceding claim, wherein the transverse and longitudinal fold lines (12, 14) are hydraulically pressed into the base tray (11).
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12. An emergency evacuation apparatus (10) according to any preceding claim, further comprising carrying handles secured to the sides of the base tray (11).
13. An emergency evacuation apparatus (10) according to any preceding claim,
25 further comprising one or more strips of foam (18) fixed to the underside of the base tray (11).
14. The combination of an adjustable bed having a plurality of panels (2) that can bend relative to each other and an emergency evacuation apparatus (10) for removing
30 a bed-ridden person from the adjustable bed in an emergency situation, the emergency evacuation apparatus (10) comprising a base tray (11) having a plurality of transverse fold lines (12) to allow the base tray (11) to bend as a plurality of panels (13); and

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mechanical locking means (20) operable between an unlocked condition in which the base tray (11) is able to bend along the transverse fold lines (12) in register with the underlying panels (2) of the adjustable bed and a locked condition in which the base tray (11) is unable to bend along the transverse fold lines (12) and to provide the base
5 tray (11) with sufficient longitudinal rigidity to support the weight of an adult person.

15. A combination of an adjustable bed and an emergency evacuation apparatus (10) according to claim 14, wherein the base tray (11) and the adjustable bed have the same number of panels (2, 13).

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16. A combination of an adjustable bed and an emergency evacuation apparatus (10) according to claim 14 or claim 15, wherein the base tray (11) has substantially the same width as the adjustable bed.

17. A combination of an adjustable bed and an emergency evacuation apparatus (10) according to claim 6, wherein a tail-board (4) of the adjustable bed includes rollers (5) or fixed projections for engagement with the runners (17) fixed to the underside of the base tray (11) to assist the removal of the emergency evacuation apparatus (10) from the adjustable bed.

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18. A method of evacuating a bed-ridden person from an adjustable bed having a plurality of panels (2) that can bend relative to each other using an emergency evacuation apparatus (10) according to any of claims 1 to 13, comprising the steps of operating the adjustable bed with the mechanical locking means (20) in the unlocked
25 condition so that the panels (13) of the base tray (11) bend along the transverse fold lines (12) in register with the underlying panels (2) of the adjustable bed until the panels (13) of the base tray (11) lie in the same plane or at a predetermined angle to each other, and operating the mechanical locking means (20) from the unlocked condition to the locked condition so that the base tray (11) is unable to bend along the
30 transverse fold lines (12) and to provide the base tray (11) with sufficient longitudinal rigidity to support the weight of an adult person.